

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL CARD (EPC)

Background

On 9 October 2013, the European Parliament voted the text of a legislative proposal amending Directive 2005/36/EC on recognition of professional qualifications. The Council is also expected to approve the same text at one of its next meetings in November. The amending Directive will therefore be adopted in first reading this year and enter into force by the end of the year or very early in 2014.

The European Professional Card (“EPC”) is one of the most important elements of the revised Directive. The concept of the EPC was developed with interested professional organisations in 2011 in the framework of the [Steering Group on the Professional Card](#) and supported by the [Krakow Declaration](#) adopted in the context of the first Single Market Forum which took place on 3-4 October 2011.

The EPC aims at simplifying the recognition of professional qualifications and increasing the efficiency of the procedure for professionals who intend taking up a regulated profession in other Member States where the profession in question is regulated. These objectives will be achieved by a greater involvement of the home Member States’ competent authorities and the use of electronic procedures.

The EPC is a voluntary instrument available for those professions who express an interest in benefitting from the advantages the card brings. The introduction of the card is however subject to the following strict conditions (Article 4a(7)):

- “(a) there is significant mobility or potential for significant mobility in the profession concerned;
- (b) there is sufficient interest expressed by the relevant stakeholders;
- (c) the profession or the education and training geared to the pursuit of the profession is regulated in a significant number of Member States.”

These conditions have to be interpreted in the light of Recital 4 of the Directive which foresees that the introduction of the EPC “should be preceded by an assessment of its suitability for the profession concerned and its impact on Member States”. Four professions (doctors, nurses, engineers and mountain guides) out of the seven which participated in the Steering Group on the Professional Card have already expressed their interest in working with the Commission on the introduction of the EPC for their professions. These professions do not have to reply to this call for interest. The Commission is interested to understand whether other professions are interested in engaging on further common work leading to the development of a European Professional Card for their profession.

The introduction of the EPC requires an implementing act to be adopted by the Commission. The Commission will assess the criteria set out above and will propose the introduction of the EPC in cases where these criteria are fully met by a given profession.

The EPC will take the form of an electronic certificate exchanged between the competent authorities of the home and host Member States concerned via the Internal Market Information System (IMI). The EPC will be available both for temporary and occasional provision of services as well as for establishment.

In the cases of establishment in another Member State or of temporary provision of services for professions with health and safety implications, the host Member State would take the final decision on issuing the EPC. However, if the host Member State fails to do so within the deadlines set in the Directive, the EPC would be issued automatically and the professional qualifications would be tacitly recognized. The tacit recognition would replace the decision on the recognition of professional qualifications, but it would not give immediate access to the employment market in the host Member State. The professional may still be required to comply with other existing registration obligations and, in certain cases, control of his knowledge of languages.

In cases of temporary and occasional provision of services for professions which do not have health and safety implications, the EPC would be issued by the home Member State and would replace the declaration, which might be required by the host Member State. In this case, the card will cover the provision of services for 18 months and will be valid on the entire territory of the Member States for which it has been requested. The professional would be able request EPC for one or more Member States.

Process

The EPC should become available for the interested profession as of the expiry of the transposition period of the Directive, probably in early 2016. To this end, the preparation of the implementing act introducing the EPC should be finalised by end of 2014 in order to allow the technical development, testing and training to be carried out before the end of the transposition period. The card could therefore be introduced for a first range of professions whilst it is not excluded that it could yet be made available to other professions at a later stage.

Against this background, the Commission publishes this call for interest inviting representative professional organisations and associations at national and EU level to signal their interest in the introduction of the European Professional Card. Once interested professions are identified, the Commission intends to set up a focus group to play an active role in the forthcoming discussions regarding the functioning of the EPC. The group would consist of ~ 30 participants (depending on the number of interested professions in the first round), including representatives of professional organisations at EU level as well as MS competent authorities.

Depending on the number of interested professions, the EPC might be introduced in several steps. In any case we envision an on-going process and professions will also be able to notify their interest in the future, potentially leading eventually to the introduction of the card for new professions.

Information on how to apply

To apply, professional organisations and associations at national and EU level are invited to send their expression of interest with an explanation on how a profession concerned would satisfy the criteria set out in the Directive to MARKT-E4-EPC@ec.europa.eu no later than 22 November 2013. The professional organisations and associations applying for the EPC are also invited to present briefly their structure in order to allow the Commission to evaluate their representativeness.